



# NWT MINING HERITAGE

## NEWSLETTER

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The NWT Mining Heritage Society is a group dedicated to building a mining museum in Yellowknife. It was officially incorporated in July 2002.

The group owns several buildings at the old Giant Mine and plans on renovating the recreation hall first, followed by buildings at the A-shaft area.

The society has also begun development of outdoor displays at Giant, surrounding the public boat parking lot.



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## Beer Barge on June 18 is Third Annual ☒

The annual Beer Barge BBQ Bash will be held on Saturday, June 18 at the Wardair Docks in Old Town, the NWT Mining Heritage Society's grand party and fundraising event, now in its third year. Tickets are now on sale by contacting the Society office at 873-6078 (Steve) or 873-4036 (Yvonne) and available from most of the Society Directors personally.

Live music, stories, and prize auctions will be the entertainment of the evening, and of course everyone is encouraged to wear their best vintage costume for the chance of prizes! The cost of tickets is \$30 which includes one free beer and unlimited food, with all proceeds going to the Mining Heritage Society and its goals of building a mining museum in Yellowknife. See you there!

## Annual General Meeting June 29 ☒

The Annual General Meeting BBQ of the Society is being held on Wednesday, June 29 at the Giant Mine Townsite Parking Lot. The free BBQ starts at 6pm and the business of the meeting will start at 7pm. Nominations for the Board are now open and anyone interested in running are encouraged to fill out the forms available on the Society

website, or by calling coordinator Steve Clarke at 873-6078. Last years AGM included a show-and-tell event where members brought in a number of fascinating antiquities including old cameras and phones, many of which were donated to the collection. We are always interested in seeing what our members are collecting, so bring down your mementos!

## Spring Trade Show ☒

Our activities and accomplishments were promoted at the Yellowknife Spring Trade Show held on May 7-8 at the Multiplex. Thanks to our volunteers for manning the booth and everybody that supported us!



### Trust Fund for Fire Victims

A trust account has been set up at the Scotiabank to support **Pam and Bill Higden**, victims of a fire which destroyed their home in April. The Higdens are long-time supporters of the Mining Heritage Society and we encourage everyone to donate so they can rebuild their lives.

To donate, please call Scotiabank.



**Queen Victoria gets a tour of Con's mill in 1970 (Bill Lister Collection)**



**Con Mine waterfront, 1952 (Don Hurd Collection)**



**Con Cougars Fastball Champs, 1959. George Plews, Dennis Minion, Max Keeping, Norm St. Cyr, Jack Chernoff, Bruce Bowers, Wayne Searle, Ted Peck, Barry Cole. (courtesy Wayne Searle)**

This newsletter is published periodically as events are planned and organized. Please contact Stephen Clark at [info@nwtminingheritage.com](mailto:info@nwtminingheritage.com) if you'd like to contribute photos or stories.

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A flurry of prospecting activity in the fall of 1935 led to the staking and discovery of rich gold deposits at the Con Mine, the Northwest Territories first gold producer with a historic brick poured on September 5, 1938. It was an important mine for the little town of Yellowknife. A wave of settlers and workers moved north and with them, a new community was born.

Jack Lambert was working as a store clerk in small town Alberta in 1938 when he heard about jobs in the north. A bunch of his friends were making \$125 a month working in Yellowknife gold camps. It was quite the wage, considering he was only making \$35 a month at the store. "I saw an article in the paper that said that a fellow by the name of Howard Carrothers was coming into Edmonton on a buying trip and he was looking for a book keeper" recalls Lambert.

Lambert was offered a job, and he flew north, landing at Con dock on Christmas Day, with the winds blowing 35 degrees below. "I was so cold when I got to the Con dock, they poured me a drink of rum. It felt like I was drinking water, I was so cold."

Con Mine was still in its infancy, but it boasted a large camp and modern facilities. Lambert was impressed with what he saw, and stayed three years. He worked as a warehouse clerk, spending his days at the counter of the commissary – the store for employees – and the mine warehouse, where staples and supplies were stored, organized, and distributed to miners. "When the miners wanted something for work around the mine or underground, they came there and we dished it out. It was like a little storehouse." Work as a clerk in Alberta had prepared him for the general routine of his job, but the mining industry was an entirely new thing, and it took some time to understand exactly what tools or supplies the miners were asking for. "Far different than farm machinery!"

Asked about the labour situation at

Con, Lambert said it was a stable workforce. "When I was there, I don't think there was any turnover. People would be coming in and if they got a job, they stayed there. This was the time of the 1930s when having a job was something to be prized."



**Jack Lambert at Con Office, 1939**

The junior staff rarely saw the upper Cominco management, but Jack has good things to remember about Bill Jewitt, the famous Cominco engineer and pilot who oversaw the first claim staking at Con in 1935. "Bill Jewitt was in charge of the NWT exploration and mining and the whole bag of tricks. He pioneered that country...Bill used to come down there and visit us once in a while. One night he came down and we had quite a session. He played piano and played songs. He was quite a man."

Jack didn't make it over to Yellowknife very often, but he remembers the Wildcat café, gambling dens, and oysters, brought in fresh from Edmonton by Red Dusseault. "I had never liked oysters at all, but I was gonna have six fried oysters. I've liked them ever since."

Jack Lambert left Yellowknife and later joined the armed forces. He never returned to Yellowknife and has good memories of his time in the north. "The one thing about the country at that time was everybody was your friend. There was never any bad feelings with anybody that I could remember. It was a wonderful time of my life."

*The story above is one of many stories written and collected by Ryan Silke for his upcoming book, 'High-Grade Tales'. Sadly, Jack Lambert passed away in March 2011.*